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BOOK REVIEWS.

SOME RECENT SPANISH TEXTS.

Galdós' Marianela. Edited, with Introduction, Notes, and Vocabulary, by J. GEDDES, JR., AND F. M. JOSSELYN. D. C. Heath & Co. Pp. i-xvi, 1-198 (text), 199-265 (notes and vocabulary).

Galdós' Marianela. Edited, with Introduction, Notes, and Vocabulary, by EDWARD GRAY. American Book Co. Pp. 1-200 (text and footnotes), 202-264 (vocabulary).

Galdós' Marianela. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by L. A. LOISEAUX. W. R. Jenkins. Pp. i-viii, 1-261 (text), 263-283 (notes).

WE welcome the appearance of this well-known creation of the eminent Spanish novelist, whose high reputation in modern letters, together with the huge bulk and great variety of his literary output, well warrants an addition to our available specimens of his work for class use. In compensation for our expectancy we have three different editions cast upon us at the same time. This is a wealth of service for which we ought to be grateful. But we should feel so with perhaps better grace if we could rid ourselves of the suspicion that the present editorial trilogy, so to speak, of one and the same work might serve as a striking example of the defects, and above all the wastefulness, of competition, without any corresponding redeeming virtues that we can discover. That the actual demand for the text in question is perhaps able to support one edition well, is a business consideration that may well be left to the publishers themselves for solution. But the critic may with propriety deprecate the tendency of publication houses to unnecessary duplication and reduplication of a given language text. The process would be commendable indeed if each succeeding reprint stood for an advance over its predecessors in realizing the desiderata of editorial workmanship. Unfortunately this is not always the case; and we have examples of texts whose genealogical tree branches out to the third or fourth generation, but where there is not enough improvement of breed to do credit to the imposing pedigree. Indeed, we have examples where the later victim of the printer's ink is distinctly inferior to his predecessor of the same title. Thus in books as in families history is apt to repeat itself. But we are taught, as a cardinal article of our economic creed, to pin so much faith to the theory of the benefits arising from unlimited domestic competition that it might seem ungenerous to carp at the wealth of choice displayed before us in the present volumes, even though a careful and impartial examination force us to the conclusion that in point of editorial workmanship and student usefulness they are not all of equal merit and desirability.

The theme of the book is a touching story of the waif, *Marianela*, ill-favored in personal charms, but of matchless heart, who fixes all her wealth of affection and

devotion upon her rich young patron, blind but handsome and idealistic. In her service to him as his boyhood companion and guide, she nurtures sentiments destined to crushing disillusion when he unexpectedly recovers his sight. For the defects of Marianela's early education amid the pitiless material surroundings of an industrial community deprive her of intellectual resources for rising above her disappointment. Into this framework the author has cast many of his well-known characteristics, especially his fondness for discussing the social and economic problems of the day. From the nature and treatment of the theme the novel is both realistic and idealistic, and is well adapted to serve as a good specimen of the author's salient literary traits. To this end the text should be given entire, particularly since it forms a literary unity well within the limits of our language publications. We have the full text in the first two editions above; the third is somewhat shortened by the omission of passages here and there, although we think that even these are essential for a full understanding of the author's characteristics.

The Heath edition is quite satisfactory. The introduction is very good, giving the reader a compendious but sufficient account of the author's work, the extraordinary voluminousness of which is succinctly and clearly analyzed. The notes answer their purpose. But we question the need or desirability of a special vocabulary in a book of this kind designed for learners beyond the elementary stages. The preparation of such implies much hack-work not safely to be intrusted to a poor hand and without intellectual compensation to the good one. But this again is a consideration outside of our province. Yet we note with some surprise the persistency with which, as apparently a settled policy, certain houses invariably inflict special vocabularies with *all* of their language texts, quite regardless of any consideration of fitness arising from the nature of the text and the grade of learners for which it is adapted. Even with those houses disposed to exercise discretion, the force of competition seems to make the tendency irresistible.

The edition of the American Book Co. has considerable annotation in which the editor shows a praiseworthy attention to details. The brief introduction is of no value in respect to any light it throws upon the author or his work. Grammatical references to several leading works are plentiful, and difficulties or peculiarities of expression are generally noted. There are some omissions, and errors are not infrequent. But the criticism that is severely condemnatory of the value of the book is the fact that the text is based on an older reading instead of that of the latest or ninth edition (Madrid, 1899), doubtless accessible at the time of the editor's preparation of the text. The circumstance is not trifling, inasmuch as this last edition underwent an extensive revision which represents hundreds of changes in the preceding editions. These changes stand for improvements of style and precision of expression, or a distinct modification of the thought, or even the correction of grammatical errors. One will see, then, that the difference is of sufficient gravity to impair seriously the value of the book, if according to current standards we are justified in assuming that a writer's last edition is a final and authoritative expression of his thought, and, presumably, the desirable one to follow.

The Jenkins edition stands as No. 2 in his series of *Novelas Escogidas*. It is a notable improvement upon its predecessor, Alarcón's *El Final de Norma*, the wild and absurdly impossible romanticism of which is not favorably adapted to giving the inexperienced reader a favorable impression of the level of Spanish letters in general or of the eminent author in particular, who through this novel is represented by one of the

least worthy of his productions. If we allow ourselves the privilege of indulging in this brief digression, it is to seize the opportunity for expressing our satisfaction with the improved standard of choice displayed by the present work, and our hope that it may be kept as high in the future in the publications of the series; for this offers an excellent opportunity to present to the American Spanish-reading public choice selections, properly revised and edited, of a department of literature in which Spain is particularly strong. The present edition can appropriately make some claims to favor with those to whom its special features appeal. The introduction is brief, but sufficient for the purpose. We have already commented upon the shortened edition. We have only to add that it seems a pity to mutilate an original for utilitarian purposes, unless this original is clearly beyond reasonable limits, and the question is one of either submitting to a reduced form or none at all; or unless a house publishes a text avowedly as merely an extract from the original, as has oftener happened with us. In our present edition the type is large and the lines wide apart, with the result that the volume is bulkier than either of the two first mentioned, albeit containing a smaller amount of matter. The annotation has the anæmic quality characterizing most of the Romance texts of the house to which it belongs, although perhaps it will commend itself to many as quite sufficient.

Galdós' Electra. Edited, with Introduction, Notes, and Vocabulary, by O. G. BUNNELL. American Book Co. Pp. 1-140 (text), 142-85 (vocabulary).

GALDÓS is far better known as a novelist than as a playwright, and there is not much risk in holding that his reputation will endure in the first capacity. The stage ill adapts itself to the ventilation of social or political problems, and given the author's characteristic traits—indeed, those which have won for him immense reforming influence—we can scarcely suppose his drama to be free of them. He has written ten plays which have created some stir, partly through the eminent literary rank and reputation of the author, partly through favoring circumstances of contemporary political events. *Electra*, one of his latest, is deemed by good judges to be the best and most notable. But we hardly think it of a class in which the fundamental principles of dramatic art are conciliated, or that it will long survive when the conditions of social unrest to which it owes its inspiration have passed away. The theme is the conflict between religious tolerance and bigotry, illustrated by the experience of the heroine, *Electra*. She is agitated by warring influences springing from her disquieting origin, and drawing her now toward the spiritual joys of the convent, now toward the more material ones of domestic life. She has no visible qualifications for the former vocation, to which indiscriminating bigotry and selfishness would sacrifice her; but she is admirably fitted for the latter, which, after the customary vicissitudes, she succeeds in realizing. The author's sympathies are not in doubt, although as a Spaniard and a good Catholic he treats his opponents with exemplary tact and moderation.

The work is well worth publication as a reflection of modern social conditions in Spain, and may be read with profit toward the close of the first year of study. But we wish that the present edition could have been better made up. The introduction is unsatisfactory. There is no annotation worth speaking of, and the vocabulary abounds in errors and omissions. A table of these would make a long list.

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